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*A Dissertation on Old Age.*

THE proportion of the human race immediately interested in this subject, though comparatively small, is so numerous and important, to themselves and others, as to invite friendly aid in discharging the duties of this last and most difficult period of human life, and sustaining the trials of it. Had man been steadfast in his obedience to his Maker, he would never have experienced the calamities of age, or been a prey to death; of this the tree of life in the garden of Eden was a constituted token. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on all for all have sinned."

It hath pleased God to mark the approach of death to the aged, with many sorrows, usually connected with old age, and to make the advance from youth to old age, exceedingly rapid. In the first ages of the world, tho' man was appointed to death and to the introductory calamities of old age, yet his life was protracted almost to a thousand years.

But infinite wisdom soon reduced it to not more than a twelfth part of that measure. In this and many preceding generations, "the days of our years are three score years and ten, and if, by reason of strength, they be four score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away." By far the majority of our race are cut off at a much earlier date, and the few who surpass it witness the truth just mentioned, that their strength is labor and sorrow. This also is commonly the lot of those whose bounds do not exceed the age of seventy. Several of their latest years are filled up with calamity.

The design of the following dissertation is to submit to the aged a few thoughts which it is hoped may be useful to them, and tend, in some degree, to smooth the path of declining life.

With a view to this, the following method will be adopted:

1. To consider the calamities of old age. On this branch of

our subject the decays of old age invite our attention.

In youth, the activity and vigor of body is a source of much comfort and joy. By this the various active functions of life are rendered easy and pleasurable to themselves and useful to others.

The strength and firmness of riper years are adapted to the occupations of manhood and the scenes of middle life, and enable the subject to discharge the active duties of individual and social life. At this period too, the mind is matured and improved, so that the man composed of body and mind has the means of usefulness and comfort to himself and others, to be active in the service of God and man and in preparation for a better world, and answer the ends of his creation. But when old age arrives, the vigor and activity of youth, and the strength and firmness of riper years are forever gone. To those succeed weakness and inactivity; and the favored few who escape the more dreaded tortures of the stone and gravel, and the class of intolerable pains incident to declining life, yet experience innumerable pains and distresses, and find the increasing weakness and inactivity of their bodies gradually reducing them, and rendering them incapable of taking a part in the active scenes of life and business.

They experience the truth of that inspired description of declining life which informs us that \*," the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they

are few, and those which look out at the windows be darkened." The faculties and members of the body grow by degrees unfit to discharge their respective offices, the eyes are dim, the ears are deaf, the hands are weak and trembling, and through feebleness and decay, the legs refuse to walk. In short, the aged man feels the gradual, but constant and incurable decline of all his bodily powers and faculties, and has the constant premonition of his approaching dissolution.

But bodily decays are far from being the only or even chief calamities of the aged. Such is the righteous constitution of heaven, and such the connection of body and mind, in the present state, the mind usually decays with the body. The important faculty of memory, requisite to nearly the whole of our knowledge, usefulness and comfort, is so dependent on the state of the body that it fails with the decays of age, till in some instances it is nearly extinct. In every degree of its decline, the man is proportionably disqualified for many of the scenes of active life, and for many of its enjoyments.

The faculty of invention fails with bodily decay. The aged become less able to discover new ideas, and through the loss of recollection, to call up the old. Hence, they are less able to form a correct judgment on the various subjects which call for their determination, and less qualified to act a useful part in their calling, or that path of life to which they are accustomed; much less can they successfully attempt a new one.

\* Eccl. xii. 3.

That fortitude and stability which were experienced in earlier times, and which are necessary to meet the dangers and surmount the difficulties incident to human life, no longer support us : we are "afraid of that which is high, and terrors are in the way," and even "the grasshopper is a burden." All exertions and occurrences beyond the usual events of the day, impress the aged with fear and dread, and shew him his rapid descent into declining life, and that he is hastening to the valley of the shadow of death.

Advancing decay removes the aged from the busy scenes of life and the intercourse of society, and from the rank and respectability to which they were accustomed.

By their own motion, or by the voice of society, they retire from public business and the active places they have filled, and others who are younger, more active and vigorous, assume them. They feel themselves to be laid aside as no longer useful.

The opinions and manners of every successive generation are, in many respects, diverse from the preceding. The aged look on these changes with regret, and feel themselves and their opinions to be neglected. They have impressive views of the many growing evils in society, especially in what is new and diverse from the opinions and customs of their day ; and they find that their feeble voice in remonstrating against the evils of the day is employed in vain.

Who can refrain from the tear of sympathy at the affecting description which Job has given of his former prosperity and

then present calamity, in the following language : "Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days, when God prospered me, when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light, I walked through darkness ; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle ; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me ; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil ; when I went out to the gate, through the city ; when I prepared my seat in the street ! The young men saw me, and hid themselves ; and the aged arose and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth.—When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me : Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me : my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out.—Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel.—I chose out their way, and sat chief—as one that comforteth the mourners. But now they who are younger than I, have me in derision."

The time would fail us to name at large the calamities of declining life. We will pass



over many of them, but we must not fail to name the loss of friends by death. We know that by far the majority of mankind die before they arrive at old age. Of course the aged who survive must have parted with most of their friends and dear connections.

Many of the aged have felt the parting stroke which numbered the chosen companion of their youth and friend of their heart to the grave. Many have suffered the loss of their dear children, and many with circumstances which added much to the weight of their sorrows. Not a few live to see their children forsake the principles of their education and the path of wisdom and virtue, and become abandoned to irreligion, uselessness, and misery, and to be apparently filling up the measure of their sins, and ripening for aggravated destruction. Sad and distressing as is the case, this cup of bitter sorrow, is the sad lot of many an aged parent.

We add to this catalogue of woes for the aged, the near prospect of approaching death—this change is so great, and attended with consequences so vast, that the mind not dead to things the most interesting and important contemplates its approach with the most awful solemnity.

Death is a great change in the manner of our existence. We enter into a new world, new employments and connections.—“The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.” We leave this world and all its joys and sorrows to appear before God, and receive his approbation or

his frowns, which fix our future destiny, without the least possibility of a change. We began to exist in the body, in a state of sin and ruin, and by our numerous and aggravated offences, we have added an immense sum of guilt to our account. A view of this fills the mind with dread at the approach of death, and those objects which naturally fill the mind are solemn and gloomy beyond description.

Nothing but a view of the gospel salvation, and a well grounded hope in the atonement of Christ, can so pluck the sting from death and the victory from the grave as shall enable the aged to contemplate its near approach with serenity.

Without this a view of approaching death must be inexpressibly gloomy.

But let us dismiss this branch of our subject, and contemplate *the duties of the aged.*

Many general duties are equally binding on the aged and the youth, and in all circumstances; this is true in particular of the great fundamental duty of the love of God and man, “On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets.” These are implied in every particular branch of the Christian religion, and no religious performance comports with divine revelation unless it involves the essential love of God and our neighbor, and there is no age, condition or relation exempted from the great command of love.

There are however many duties adapted to particular ages, circumstances, and relations, or at least, apply with peculiar obligation or emphasis to them—Those duties which either ex-



clusively or more eminently apply to the aged are now to be considered.

1. Among these we begin with resignation to the divine will. The will of God is revealed in his holy word as it respects the whole system of law and gospel; and entire submission to that will thus manifested, is essential to genuine religion—Every good man esteems God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and hates every false way; but we are now to consider especially the duty of the aged to be resigned to the providential will of God, or the divine disposing determination and agency in all events. We must be fully established in the universal and perfect government of God, or that "his counsel shall stand and he will do all his pleasure;" and that the divine purposes and agency are all perfect in wisdom and goodness. In this is implied a general submission to the will of God, which is presupposed in all cases of particular submission. The calamities allotted by divine wisdom to declining life, call for particular exertions of the spirit of submission on many occasions, some of which we have been led to mention already.

The bodily decays usually attending the aged, very much reduce the comforts of life, and increase its evils.

Old age is usually attended with weakness, inability, and pain and what much increases the evil the decays and pains of age seldom admit a cure.

These evils are much aggravated to the sufferers, by the failure of our mental powers and

especially of the fortitude of earlier years.

Under these and the many other calamities incident to declining life, resignation to our lot as the appointment of Heaven is a great relief and indispensable duty. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Or shall the thing formed, say to him who formed it, why hast thou made me thus?

Reason and religion, the word of God and our own comfort loudly and with one voice, teach submission to the divine will, saying "be still and know that I am God." God has wisely appointed the calamities of age to humble the pride of men; to shew us our exceeding sinfulness and desert of his holy displeasure; to wean us from the world; to remind us of our approaching removal, and to prepare us for it; and shall we repine at the appointments of infinite perfection? Shall we not accept the punishment of our sins, and say, it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good! We add, that *prayer* is eminently the duty of old age; this is indeed, a great duty of every age, but old age is the evil day, it is the season of sorrow, on account of the reasons named, and of many others, and "If any be afflicted let him pray." The book of psalms is eminently adapted to the aged, and it is so especially, because the Psalmist, as his afflictions abound, betakes himself to humble supplication, and abounds in prayer? "O God, saith he, thou hast taught me from my youth—Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not." "Cast me not off in the time of old

age, forsake me not when my strength faileth."

God is righteous in all the sorrows of declining life, yea he is not only righteous, but merciful, yea abundant in mercy. When we consider the number and greatness of our transgressions and the aggravations of a long life distinguished with favors, which we have very greatly abused, and when we remember our coevals who are generally numbered to the grave, we are constrained to acknowledge that it is indeed of the Lord's mercy, that we are not consumed, and that we still live because his compassions fail not.

We have abundant inducement to be instant in prayer, because we have many sorrows which God only can relieve, and because our time is short, and we have very much depending on divine mercy. When a few days, a few days indeed, are come we shall go the way whence we shall not return. Now is the last and only opportunity for us to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, and to lay hold on eternal life, and God for Christ's sake "will hear the prayer of the humble, and not despise their prayer." "Call on me," saith he, "in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." How many subjects have we for humble, fervent and persevering prayer? Our only hope in all our sorrows is in God, and he bestows the needed salvation in answer to prayer. Our preparation for a safe and happy death is all depending on the infinitely wise and free grace of God, and he makes all grace abound in answer to prayer.

The whole interest of our families and friends, the future and eternal state of our dear children is suspended on the grace of God, and "for these things he will be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." The prosperity of our dear country, and all the interests of his redeemed church are in his hands, and he is waiting to be gracious in answer to prayer. It will be soon too late, our days will be numbered and finished, let no more of them be lost, but let us "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and let us watch unto prayer."

Watching should be connected with prayer. Surrounded with dangers as we are, from within and without, we should stand with our loins girt, and our lamps trimmed and burning, that when we have done all we may stand. How often doth our Lord call on us in his word to *watch*, and to "arise and trim our lamps, and be awake and be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom, lest coming suddenly he find us sleeping."

The numerous and awful warnings of God's providence, speak the same truths with his holy word. Oh, let us not turn a deaf ear to these his last calls to us, lest we call in our turn and he will not hear, we cry and he will not answer.

To prayer and watchfulness we must join solemn and frequent self examination. We must examine and re-examine ourselves, by the rules of God's word, concerning the genuineness and sincerity of our love to God, our repentance, our faith and the other graces of the Spi-

fit, and the various fruits of the Spirit, in a life of practical holiness in the branches of obedience to the commands of Christ.—Knowing that if we do not produce the fruits of Christian holiness, it is because there is no life in us.

We must devoutly attend the institutions and duties of the Christian religion, such as prayer, private and social, the reading the holy scriptures, the careful and religious observation of the Christian sabbath, and the rest of the Christian institutions.

We must watch and pray against those sins which most easily beset us, the sins of age; these are especially, though not exclusively, the love of the world, and an uneasy and repining spirit. Let us always strive to keep a humble and submissive temper, and let the meekness and gentleness of Christ be manifest in our conversation, always remembering that the Lord is at hand, and his coming draweth nigh.

Among the duties of old age, we must by no means omit to mention the incumbent on us respecting our children, and the youth in general. They may profit by our experience and with regard to these, the aged may live to important purposes. What can be more commendable than the address of the aged and departing prophet Elijah, to his young and beloved friend? "What shall I do for thee before I be taken from thee?" This must be the language of every pious old man, to the youth about him. Experienced age may communicate many salutary and practical truths to the young, and impress

them with motives and arguments drawn from experience and observation.

The near approach of the aged to the world of spirits, enables them to address the young on the vast and important realities of religion and eternity—with great solemnity, and with a hopeful prospect of a serious hearing. The last words of the dying are generally noticed, and all the words of the aged are to be numbered among their last.—What a price is in the hand of the aged to diffuse the instructions of wisdom among the young! How profitably may the aged be employed in teaching to the young the lessons of wisdom, virtue and the fear of the Lord!

Especially, how animating is the prospect when their own children are their pupils! That respect and veneration which the Author of our nature has impressed on the hearts of children for their parents is an avenue to the mind for the conveyance of wisdom in the form of parental instruction and advice. This advantage should be improved with great diligence and fidelity, and it should be attended with humble supplication for the divine blessing.

How highly favored was Solomon, in his youth, to be the beloved child of a pious father, who taught him the precepts of wisdom with the most tender and moving importunity of parental love; as he has informed us in the fourth chapter of his Proverbs and thirteen first verses. Those parental instructions were not forgotten. The wise man well remembered them in his old age, and we have



ground to believe that these instructions were much conducive to that rare degree of the most important wisdom, in which he so much excelled.

Let the aged be encouraged to fill up their latest days in leading the youth, and especially their own children, by kind and well timed instructions and advice in the paths of wisdom, virtue and piety.

The aged may do much for the benefit of the rising generation, by their example. Hence the peculiar inducements to them to live for the good of the rising age; their personal motives to a life of wisdom and piety, are in every respect as strong as on others, and much more so from the consideration that their end is near: "The young may die, but the old must die." Whatever they do, preparatory to death and futurity must be done quickly; and who would not improve the last hour of that day which is succeeded by the long night in which no man can work! But this late hour of life may be improved, not only for their own benefit but for that of their children, and the rising generation. Age and experience give weight to their example, and that example gives energy to their counsel; in this respect, old age is the most important and useful part of life.

What though we are withdrawn from the busy scenes of active public life, the eyes of the younger are still on us, and we may render old age useful and venerable by practising the duties of men and of Christians in their view, and thus leaving our last, and most decided testimony for virtue and religion.

Is old age the evil day? is it attended with many calamities and discouragements? It has also its advantages; among which and none of the least, is the weight of example, attending experienced years. In this view, the aged may be encouraged to exert their remaining prayers for the good of mankind, and at the same time, and in the same manner, for their own greatest benefit.

Well founded and exceedingly encouraging is the conclusion that the path of wisdom, of virtue, and religion, leads us with equal certainty to promote by active exertions the glory of God, the interest of mankind, and our own best good; this is a general truth applying to all the duties and truths of life.

But it is emphatically true of old age. The man venerable for age and piety wishes to devote his last days to a preparation for a safe and happy death, and a blessed immortality; for this he must live in a course of undissembled piety;—he must serve God faithfully, and whether he eat or drink, or whatever he doth, do all to the glory of God; and for this, he must pray for the peace of Jerusalem, seek the best interests of society, and do good to all as he hath opportunity, especially to the household of faith.

The man who is ardently engaged in the advancement of the divine glory, in the accomplishment of the work of redemption, expresses the most undissembled love to God and concern for the honor of Jesus Christ, and the purest affection to his fellow men; and is of course, the most ready and active in all the

duties of his place and station ; such an one is prepared to meet the bridegroom, and whenever he shall come he will " find him watching." Let the aged therefore remember, this that they need not live in vain. Their lives if spent in the discharge of duty, will be spent to the glory of God, the best good of their fellow men, and their own everlasting good. By this course old age will be rendered comfortable, death will be safe, and eternity blessed.

We are next to consider the *comforts and supports of old age*. On this head we attempt not to describe the comforts actually enjoyed by the aged, but those which divine providence places within their reach, so that if their minds are properly disposed, they may enjoy them, and which, in many instances, are actually enjoyed.

Among these, the following sources of consolation deserve a leading notice.

1. The universality and perfection of the divine government. None of the truths of religion rest on a more firm and solid basis than that the divine government is universal and perfect. There are indeed mysteries involved in all important truths, both in the natural and moral world ; but these are by no means a just objection against the existence of such truths. There are more mysteries implied in the existence of the one living and true God than in any other truth, and yet we know, not only that this is true, but that it is fundamental to all other truth, so that a denial of this is a denial in effect, of all other truth. In like manner, the universality

and perfection of the divine government, involves some difficulties beyond our comprehension, but the denial of this evinces general absurdity and contradiction, and the doctrine is supported by the most direct and indubitable evidence. This applies with equal certainty to the moral and providential government of the Most High. It equally respects the fall of a sparrow, the destruction of an empire, the actions of all moral creatures, and the retributions of eternity. With the most perfect assurance we may say, in the inspired words of scripture, " The Lord reigneth let the earth rejoice, and the multitude of the islands be glad thereof."

The purposes of divine wisdom are all perfect, and they change not. God hath said, My counsel shall stand and I will, do all my pleasure. Is it possible, that under the government of such a Being there should be just ground for complaint, or that any event should take place, the existence of which is injurious on the whole ? Partial evil, both natural and moral may exist, but in no greater measure than infinite perfection will make subservient to the greatest good. The time of old age is, indeed " the evil day," and its calamities and sorrows are not few or small ; but let the aged remember that " the everlasting God, the Lord, who is the creator of all the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary, there is no searching of his understanding, he giveth power to the faint, and to those who have no might he increaseth strength."

Scriptural views of the univer-

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sal and perfect government of the Most High, furnish a general ground of confidence in God, applicable to all particular cases, by which the heart may quietly rest in the darkest times and under the most severe trials, and be assured that all is governed well, and shall issue in the greatest good. In the many sorrows of declining life there is a safe hiding place in the adorable perfection of God, and the unfailing stability of his gracious promises. Therefore "they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." The holy scriptures abound with declarations of the extent and perfection of the divine government over all creatures, and all worlds, and the gracious promises of God embrace every supposeable case of fear and danger which can fall to the lot of any who put their trust in the living God. All such may rest assured of deliverance in distress, or support under it, and that in the final issue they shall find it good for them that they have been afflicted.

2. The mediatorial plan of redemption revealed in the gospel, is an unfailing source of consolation.

Scriptural views of the divine government assure us that all events in all worlds are under the disposal of infinite perfection, and therefore that all things will issue well. But by the revelation of the mediatorial plan we are instructed in the way in which they will be brought to their happy issue, even by Jesus

Christ in the work of redemption.

Though an assurance that infinite perfection governs all, involves the certain proof that all will issue well; yet the awful prevalence of sin and misery in our world, and the forebodings of still greater evil in the world to come cast a gloom over the contemplative and serious mind, not easily dissipated by human investigation; but in the gospel this greatest difficulty is solved, or at least the divine wisdom is wonderfully displayed. Here is glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will to man.

The doctrine of the divine trinity in unity, or the infinitely perfect mode of the divine existence, so as to constitute the most perfect and independent unity, and still to embrace all the advantages of a complete trinity, this being revealed, we are capacitated to believe the revealed distinction in the personal agency of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and how that "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The doctrine of the incarnation of the word, and giving his life a ransom for sinners, opens a door of hope for the guilty, shews how God can be just and justify the ungodly, who believe on the Son of God.

Jesus Christ is the divinely appointed substitute for the guilty. In his mediatorial character and work, the Father is well pleased. "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses."



"Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other;" and "grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

This united display of divine perfections in Jesus Christ, so far beyond any thing conceivable by man, in any other way, is all consequent on the introduction of moral and natural evil; could not have taken place without it, and is the plan of infinite perfection to counteract all this evil, and overrule it to much greater good. And infinite perfection will not fail of the accomplishment of its object. This wonderful object is accomplished by the actual and eternal salvation of redeemed sinners, even of all those who believe on the Son of God. The salvation of sinners is the direct object of the incarnation and death of Christ, yet so that other most important objects are accomplished by it; for in this wonderful plan, "grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord;" and "all things are for the sake of the saved, that the abundant grace through the thanksgiving of many, may redound to the glory of God."

In the devout contemplation of this most animating theme, the good man, borne down with the calamities of age, forgets his sorrows, and is ready to say, in the words of aged and pious Simeon in similar views, "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Under the bodily decays and pains of declining life, the good man remembers the sufferings

of Christ for the sins of his people, he confesses his own desert of these and greater evils, he accepts the punishment of his sins, and adores the riches of divine grace for the many mercies mingled with his sufferings. The same views impress him under the similar decays of his mental powers, under the loss of friends, and the evils in society. Amidst the numerous sorrows of painful recollection of the sins and sorrows of his past life, and the abounding evils which surround him, he reposes in the assured belief that the Lord Jesus Christ is head over all things to the church, and that he will guide the storm, and cause all past and present evils to subserve the interest of his eternal kingdom, and promote the good of all his faithful followers.

When he looks forward to his approaching removal to the world of spirits, and realizes the solemnities of eternity, knowing that he is a sinner by nature and by practice, and that it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God, he flees for refuge to the hope set before him; and rests with thankful praises on the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, knowing that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and saves to the uttermost, all who come to God by him.

Sensible of the numerous faults of his past life, and even of his best services; his only hope is on the infinite grace of God in Jesus Christ, and he is comforted in that hope, and longs to be delivered from sin, and made perfect in the praise of his God and Saviour, and is comforted in all his sorrows in God, in Christ, in

the government of God, in the grace of the gospel, the predictions and promises of the word of life, and the sure accomplishment of the application of the work of redemption, till the headstone thereof shall be brought forth with shouting, crying grace, grace to it.

Such are the comforts of declining life, in the view of a separation from all below, and an entrance on the great scenes of eternity, which christianity dictates and inspires. But the aged who are strangers to the faith of the gospel, and the views which it inspires, have also no sources of consolation—to dispel the gloom of declining life, support them under present evils, or arm them against the terrors of those which are future.

Let this discourse be concluded with the following address to the aged.

Respected companions in years and sorrows, the writer is no stranger to your calamities, for he experiences similar; he attempts not to shew you a way to shun the evils of old age and death, but he would gladly suggest a few thoughts to you and himself which may assist us to bear those evils as we ought, and as may render them useful to us here, and a lasting benefit hereafter.

We must be established in the conclusion that the divine government is uncorrupt and perfect, that Christ is head over all things to the church, that we and all for whom we are concerned, are in his hand, that such have forfeited his favor, and all we possess or hope for is on the foundation of sovereign grace,

pure grace reigning through righteousness—by Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour; and that the calamities of life, and the approach of death are wisely ordered, and will turn to our benefit, if we do not abuse them. Let us contemplate these and similar truths with becoming solemnity, and use the means which God has provided, that we may so improve them as to be prepared to give up our account with joy and not with grief. Let us be instant in the service of God, and in doing good to our fellow men. Let us give all diligence to make our own calling and election sure, and promote the best good of our fellow men.

To all the other exertions in duty which christianity requires, let us join ardent and persevering prayer. God knows our needs and is able and ready to supply them; and it is even after so long a time, now called to-day, and it is our last day, the night cometh when no man can work. Let us be diligent that we may be found of him in peace.

May all grace abound to us in all our trials, and “the goodwill of him who dwelt in the bush,” never leave us nor forsake us, and may we have a remembrance in the resurrection of the just, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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*Thoughts on Death.*

AS “it is appointed to man once to die,” and as this event is highly interesting and important to every one, we are called to consider it in relation

to all, and especially to ourselves.

We may view it with respect to the very great change in our manner of existence, and its various and important concomitants and consequences.

*Death* is a dissolution of the connection between soul and body, the cessation of animal life and motion, and the return of the body to its native dust; this may be called bodily death. All the connection of the soul with the body, and all the functions consequent on that connection cease, and the spirit acts without the agency or instrumentality of the body, till they are reunited in the resurrection of the body; the mind no longer receives information by the bodily senses, or perceives or acts by their instrumentality, consequently it hath no intercourse, in a manner known to us, with the objects of the senses, or the concerns of this material and sensible world; though as we are strangers to the mode of existence for separate spirits, they may have communications from the objects of sense in ways to us unknown.

The natural relations of families, and larger circles in this life as they result from our existing in the body, and are useful only for the functions of this bodily life, will not exist in the world of spirits. In that world "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels." How empty then are the pursuits and prospects of men of the world, whose treasures are only of this earth, and who have no portion beyond the grave! Would we wish for a portion beyond the grave, we must lay

up treasures in heaven; the food and support of the mind, where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through or steal.

We proceed to observe that death is the penal evil originally threatened to man for sin. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This is generally understood to imply temporal death, or that death of the body of which we have been treating. By many it is supposed to imply what is called spiritual death, or a state of sin; at any rate this is implied in that state into which we are brought by transgression. The threatening also implies a state of condemnation and punishment, or what is called eternal death. So true is it that it is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment.—The proper mode of determining the nature and extent of the first threatening to man, for sin, is to attend to the scriptural meaning of the term *death*, when mentioned as a penal evil, and it is conceived that by this rule, we shall be led to determine that all the evil we have named is comprised in it. The last and most important meaning of the threatening is the second death, or a state of endless punishment, consisting in misery. The evil threatened is the punishment of sin. We may therefore be assured that whatever evil is represented in scripture, as the punishment of sin, is comprised in the threatening of death to the first transgression.

The original threatening was addressed only to Adam, but by the event, and by subsequent scriptures, it appears that Adam



stood in that relation to his posterity by which their character and state would be affected by his conduct, even as his own. He was constituted a public, federal or complex person, with respect to his posterity ; so that the fruits of the first transgression are the same to him and his posterity, in point both of character and state. This is accordingly verified in experience through all generations. "By one man sin has entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passeth upon all, for all have sinned." In consequence of the original lapse, the whole race of man is by nature in a state of sin, and condemnation, and so justly exposed to all that evil implied in the full import of the word *death* in the original threatening.

The whole race of man must therefore be in a state of hopeless ruin, without the intervention of sovereign grace, on the mediatorial plan of redemption and salvation, by Jesus Christ. The great object of divine revelation after describing the complete ruin of man by sin, is to reveal and explain the way to recovery and salvation through Jesus Christ.

The revelation of the mediatorial plan, opens a door of hope for the guilty and dying. We are led to ask with the deepest concern, What has God wrought for guilty and ruined man? The scriptural answer is, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, and saves to the uttermost, all who come to God by him. This great salvation delivers from the power and punishment of sin, and brings the sinner into union with God, to the par-

don of sin, and the favor of God, and eternal life, and all this "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and that we are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ." Thus Christ redeems his people from the curse of the law, or the second death, and though he doth not exempt them from the death of the body, yet he hath secured a blessed resurrection for it, and a reunion with the soul, at the end of the world. But this is not absolutely for the sinful and ruined race of man, but for those only who believe to the saving of the soul. "He who believeth shall be saved, but he who believeth not shall be damned." Such is the will of infinite perfection, that hereby the sinner may be saved in a manner which exalts the divine character and government, condemns sin, and saves the sinner, in a way honorable to God, safe for the sinner, and which makes the most illustrious display of free and sovereign grace, even "grace reigning through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Hence those who are true believers in Christ may look forward with hope in the hour of their departure. To such, the sting is plucked from death, and the victory from the grave ; but to the unbelieving and impenitent, the weight of the curse of God's broken law, and all the justly deserved threatenings for the abuse of gospel grace, are in their full force against them.

To escape therefore, from the wrath to come, we must be united to Christ, by divine faith, and be sanctified by his spirit. On such the second death hath no power, and those who are of this description may suffer the dissolution of this bodily life with a divinely supporting hope of a blessed immortality.

This leads us to observe that it is an object of the greatest concern, to be prepared to meet God in this great and most interesting change of death. This great change, exceedingly important in various respects, is especially so in this, *viz.* that it admits of no future change.

The present life is given us to prepare for an eternal state, and in the general and final judgment, we shall be judged "according to our works," and "according to the things done in the body." The retributions of eternity depend therefore, on our preparation for death. Who then will not be in earnest in the enquiry, How shall I be prepared to meet my God?

A preparation for death may be considered in a general, or particular sense. That which is general, implies a state of union to Christ by the faith of the gospel, a justified state through the atonement of Christ, and a life of Christian holiness. This is usually called a *habitual preparedness for death*. Because all such are entitled, according to the gospel, to eternal life, and will be saved, whenever and how suddenly and unexpectedly soever it may please God to call them hence.

But what is called an actual preparation for death, implies in addition to what is already

mentioned, those lively views and exercises respecting our death, and of divine and eternal things in general, which correspond to the nature and solemnity of the event, and the unspeakably interesting concern which we have in it.

This implies that we have a clear and solemn prospect of the near approach of our dissolution and of the great realities of our approaching state. And it implies the following particulars, *viz.*

1. Submission to the righteous will of God in death, founded in a view of the perfect rectitude of the divine government.

The dying Christian properly affected, contemplates the holy hand of God in his death, and views it as the final consequence of his great sin, and is still, and knows that he who inflicts it is God. He cordially subscribes to the infinite perfection of the divine character and government.

He feels himself to be a great sinner, and acknowledges the righteousness of God in all the evils threatened, and executed on transgressors for sin, and especially in his own death. He so views his exceedingly sinful state, and the greatness of his guilt, that he utterly despairs of ever obtaining pardon and the favor of God by any thing in himself, and he accepts the punishment of his sins, as a fit and becoming expression of the infinite perfection of the divine character; and he utterly despairs of any relief except from the immense riches and sovereign freedom of gospel grace in our Lord Jesus Christ. Under scrip-

tural impressions of his extreme necessity and unworthiness, and of the preciousness of Christ as the fit and only Saviour, he pleads for pardon and all saving mercy, through his atonement, and humbly commits his departing spirit to God who gave it. With humble confidence in God he commits the keeping of his soul to him as to a faithful Creator and Redeemer, and casts all his cares upon him. In respect to his friends, his country, and the church of God, he humbly commits them to divine keeping, and cries to them as the departing Prophet to his friend, "What shall I do for thee, before I be taken from thee?" Leaves his best advice and counsel with his family and friends, together with his prayers for them and for all, but especially for the church on earth, and with humble resignation he sleeps in Jesus.

This concise view of death, is adapted to impress our minds with many solemn and weighty considerations. Among these no one is more interesting than the duty and importance of our spending life in preparation for death and the future world.

Death is the dissolution of the union between soul and body, and the final conclusion of this present mode of existence and separation from this world, from the objects of sense, and from the connections and objects and relations of the present life. Separated from all the objects of our dear affection on the earth, we enter the world of spirits, and must appear before God to give our account for the things done in the body, and this ac-

count must be given to him, who searcheth the reins and hearts of the children of men, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. And the state into which we shall then enter is according to what we have done in the body, and this state is unchangeable.— From the decisions of that interesting day, there is no appeal.

The present life is a state of trial, in which we pass that great change, whereby we are translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son. By sin we are plunged into a state of remediless ruin, guilt and misery, from which there is no possible escape but by the atonement and grace of the gospel; by this we may pass from death to life, and rejoice in the great salvation, for ever. But the overtures of Divine grace to us are limited to the present life; our probation reaches not into the state of the dead, therefore whatever is effected for the salvation of the soul must be effected now.

"Behold *now* is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." Between the righteous and the wicked, in the world of spirits, there is a great gulf fixed," so that they can not pass from one to the other.

Hence the vast importance of the present life as the only season to escape from the wrath to come, and secure a blessed immortality. The salvation of all who are saved is by free grace, through Christ; those who are saved believe to the saving of the soul. But the faith which is to salvation is always connected with sanctification. A life of christian holiness, is the dividing line, between be-



lievers and unbelievers, the saved and the lost.

Hence we cannot have spiritual evidence of our preparation for death, and a well grounded hope of blessedness beyond the grave, except by a consciousness of a work of the divine Spirit in our hearts, by which we are animated to a life of christian holiness in heart and life. That christian holiness which is connected with salvation may be termed the religion of the heart, of the tongue, and of the life. The religion of the heart is founded in that divine work which is called regeneration, by the Spirit of God, by which the moral disposition, temper, or taste, is changed, and the sinner, from being governed by an evil heart, influenced by the love of sin, and alienation from God and goodness, is reconciled to God, and truly counts all things but loss, for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, and a foundation is laid, according to the gracious plan of the gospel, for all holy views and affections to God and divine objects in general, and for all right and benevolent regard to men.

The religion of the tongue is that free and undissembled verbal testimony to the truth and excellence of christianity in its various branches, to men, on proper occasions, and to God in all devout and sincere worship, which naturally flows from such a state of the heart.

The religion of the life, or practical religion, has for its object the keeping the commandments of God, or that uniform course of christian obedience which the gospel requires, and

which is the genuine expression and proof of a saving change.

Preparation for a safe and happy death in the children of God is effected by the divine blessing, or the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit accompanying the instituted means of grace and salvation, and it is only in the use of the instituted means, in the manner pointed out in the institution, that we are authorized to hope for the divine blessing to render them successful.

As the great mean of preparation for death, we must therefore, give all diligence to make our calling and election sure in the use of these means, and in the manner prescribed, and we must persevere in this course to the end of our lives.

The whole system of instituted means for this important end must be diligently applied; religion must truly be our business, our calling, from which we must not be detached by any worldly inducements, deceitful lusts, or temptations from the enemy of our souls. We are acting for eternity, and Oh, how doth it concern us to act as it becometh those who are shortly going to that world.

A description of the means divinely instituted, to secure a safe and happy death, would open too large a field for present discussion, and it would be needless as they are specified in the holy scriptures, and are easily understood. But it is proper to observe that the success of these means depends wholly on the divine blessing. "Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase." This divine blessing

is bestowed in answer to prayer; we are therefore to consider prayer as essentially connected with all other means, and to join it with them, and we have the most gracious encouragement to this duty, for the Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth, and he that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him who knocketh, it shall be opened. How urgently therefore are we called to "pray always with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and to watch unto prayer."

The sad and dreadful prospect opened by death, to those who are lost, must stimulate us to "give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." When we reflect on the very great worth of the soul, the awful and glorious retributions of eternity, and the joys and sorrows of departed souls, as represented in the scriptures of divine truth, and especially in the address of that *friend of sinners* who "gave his life a ransom for many," and suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, shall we not take the friendly warning and "fly from the wrath to come," lest we are finally lost, with the world of the ungodly, and compelled to say with many others in the regions of despair, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved!"

This subject calls the serious attention of those who entertain a hope of eternal life, but are distressed with many fears of coming short at last.

The prevalence of these fears, if they are real Christians, may arise from mistaken or indistinct

views of christianity, from the weakness of their faith, from the state of their mind depressed with melancholy, or from their comparative negligence in the duties of religion.

To obtain a more stable and supporting hope, they must labor and pray for more correct and clear views of the nature and operations of religion in the soul. They must examine themselves more frequently and strictly, they must pray more earnestly, they must watch against the incursions of melancholy, and must make religion more eminently, the business of their lives.

If they are distressed with temptations from the world, the flesh, or the devil, they must resist—they must watch and pray, and never yield to the temptations, but pray with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and resist the tempter, steadfast in the faith. If they thus do and endure to the end, they will be carried through all their dangers, and be conquerors, through him who loved them and died for them.

A proper state of mind in which to meet the king of terrors, is a humbling sense of our own extreme pollution and guilt; an unreserved submission to the holy and righteous will of God, in the punishment of sin, with a meek reliance on the free grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the gospel; and a commitment of our souls to him, as a faithful creator and Redeemer, together with resignation in all things to the divine will, casting all our dear connections on earth, on divine mercy, and committing

his redeemed church to his guardian care; ardently praying that his kingdom may come and his will be done on earth as in heaven.

A scriptural review of the death of good men left on sacred record, is suited to animate us to live the good man's life.

"Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him," And "before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God." Jacob before his death was blessed with a foresight of the great things God would do for his church, down till the incarnation of the promised Saviour, the coming of the Shiloh to whom the gathering of the people should be. Joseph foresaw the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones. Moses, in view of the wonders of divine wisdom and grace, closed his life in publishing the name of the Lord, and ascribing greatness to our God. David, after all his trials, closed his life with assuring his people that "he had prepared for the house of his God with all his might," and in expressing his firm belief in the promised Saviour. Simeon and Anna, in the closing scene of life, recognized the incarnation of the Son of God with exultation and thanksgiving, and expressed their readiness to depart. Holy Stephen died for the faith of the gospel, and in his departing moments, saw heaven opened, and the Son of God, on the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, and committed his departing spirit to his guardian care.

And what shall I more say?

for the time would fail to speak of that long list of distinguished worthies who followed God, living and dying, and resigned their spirits in humble dependence on the divine word.

"These all died in faith not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth."

All these things were written for an example, and they afford the most important instruction and most excellent pattern for us to follow. Hastening as we are to the house appointed for all living, and to the world of spirits, with such facts and examples before us, shall we not employ the short period of our remaining continuance on earth, in diligent preparation for that world to which we are hastening; and be in readiness for a union with all the wise and good who have gone before us, and to welcome to that blessed society of the spirits of the just made perfect, all who shall come after us? Let us follow in the path of "those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." And let the perfectly bright example of all the graces in our suffering Saviour, in the hour of his departure, arrest all the powers of our souls.

"Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience, the race set before us, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy which was set before him, endured the cross,



despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God."

*On the Reward of the good and faithful Servant, in the joy of his Lord.*

**T**HOUGH a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God\*. Though men may cast off fear, restrain prayer, contemn God and his ordinances, and scorn those who walk with him, yet verily there is a reward for the righteous†. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance doth behold the upright‡. He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.

This reward, which God will give to every good and faithful servant, is expressed by various names and things in the holy scriptures. In the old testament it is expressed by being received into glory. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory. The wise shall inherit glory. In the New Testament, it is described under the notion of a kingdom. Fear not, little flock, it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Sometimes it is termed, Eternal Life, a crown of righteousness, and the inheritance of all things. These in general are expressive of its

immense worth, grandeur and magnificence. But in the gospel of St. Matthew xxv. 21. it is expressed in a peculiar manner, by the joy of our Lord. Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. The words not only express the liberality and superabundance of the reward, as the faithful servant who has been faithful over a few things only shall be ruler over many things, but they seem to imply that he shall have a participation in the same joy and blessedness, in kind, as his Lord's. Can this be the meaning that the saints, but poor sinful dust and ashes, shall be raised up to a participation in the same kind of joy and blessedness, as the man Christ Jesus? Nay as that of God himself? It is humbly conceived that this may be the true sense of the text.

Upon a careful examination of the subject, it is imagined that the joy and blessedness of our Lord is founded in the same principle, and has the same objects as the joy and blessedness of the saints. The Lord Jesus rejoiceth in the infinite perfection and the glory of the Father, and in his glorious works, in all the manifestations of his perfections and glory in his works, and in all the good he hath effected by them; in his love to him, and to all the saved in him; and in the holiness, perfection and happiness of the church, and of the whole holy moral system of beings. He rejoices in his own infinite fulness as mediator, in his love to the church, in its re-

\* Eccl. viii. 12. † Psalm lviii. 11.  
‡ Psalm xi. 7.

demption, holiness and happiness. He rejoiceth and is blessed in his Father's approbation, in his own exaltation, and in all the happy effects of his mediatorship. In one comprehensive view of these consists his joy and blessedness. The blessedness of the deity doubtless consisteth in the contemplation of his own infinite perfection, and of the perfection of all his works, and in the perfection and happiness of his holy moral kingdom. Now this blessedness hath its foundation in love.—God is love.\* He is love to himself, to holiness, to his own honor, and government and to the perfection of his kingdom.—Were it not that he loved these he could not rejoice, or be blessed in them. Did not our Lord Jesus Christ love them they could not be his joy, or blessedness. The divine blessedness is therefore founded in love. God has one perfectly comprehensive view of himself and of all his works, and of the perfection and blessedness of his moral kingdom, from and to all eternity, without the least possible change. Hence his blessedness is unchangeably the same from and to all eternity.

From comparing the blessedness of the good and faithful servant with the joy, or blessedness of his Lord, it may appear that his blessedness, how far soever it may differ in degree, is the same in kind, as that of his Lord. His joy originates from the same principle; love to God to his Saviour, to holiness, to the church of God, and to the perfection and happiness of the

kingdom of God. He was chosen to be conformed to the image of the Son of God\*; to be holy and without blame before him in love†. In regeneration and sanctification, the love of God hath been shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, and the same spirit which was in Christ hath been given to him. In death he is made perfect in holiness, loves God with all his heart, his Saviour, his fellow saints, and holy objects perfectly. He therefore rejoices in the infinite holiness, supreme dominion, consummate and eternal blessedness of God with all his heart. He is prepared to join all the hosts of heaven in shouting Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him. He at once rejoices in the glory of God, in his blessedness, and in all the manifestations of his glory. Hence he is blessed in all the perfection and blessedness of God himself, and so far, as he can comprehend it, it becomes his own blessedness. As he is perfectly united in love to his Redeemer, he rejoices in all his glory and exaltation, in all the honor he hath done the Father, his law and government; and in all the good he hath effected, and in all the blessedness he enjoys as mediator. As he loves God and his Saviour more than his own life and happiness, so he rejoices more in them than if they were his own, so far as his mind can conceive of them; and in this way it becomes his own personal happiness, and is the same in kind as the joy and blessedness

\* 1 John iv. 8.

† Romans viii. 29. † Eph. i. 4.

of his Lord. He rejoices in his own perfect holiness and blessedness, in the love of Christ towards him, and in all the honor which his salvation will bring to his Saviour. At the same time he rejoices equally in the salvation of all his redeemed brethren, as all selfishness will then be done away, and as he will love others as well as himself. St. Paul rejoiced in this that the crown of righteousness would be given not only to himself but to the innumerable multitude of his fellow saints. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give unto me at that day : and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing\*. He will rejoice in the purity, perfection and happiness of the whole church ; in the holiness and perfection of the Angels, and in the perfection and blessedness of all holy and happy beings. Thus the saints will rejoice and be blessed in all the blessedness of heaven, so far as they shall be able to conceive of it. Thus they will have a most glorious and abundant communion with their Lord in love, and in the same kind of blessedness. He rejoices in the purity and blessedness of the church ; to present it without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.— He is represented as rejoicing over her with exceeding joy, and as satisfied for all his shame and sufferings in her salvation. As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee†. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be

satisfied‡. Thus all the saints, every good and faithful servant, hath communion with his Lord in love and in blessedness. His joy being founded in love, and consisting in the same things as the joy of the Lord must be in kind the same. Hence it is with the greatest propriety termed the joy of our Lord. Enter then into the joy of thy Lord. It is true that the joy of Christ will be infinitely greater than that of the saints, because he is infinitely more holy than they, and so must have comparatively greater blessedness in the same objects and things ; and as his understanding is infinite and he perfectly comprehends all the perfection and happiness of himself and of all his creatures. But theirs is of the same kind.

What a grand and exalted idea does this give us of the reward, the exaltation and blessedness of the good man, raised up from his naturally sinful, lost and miserable condition, to a participation in the same blessedness, in kind, with his Lord, with God himself ! He enters into all the happiness of the heavenly world, and of the whole holy kingdom of God, so far as he can possibly comprehend and enjoy it. This must be the most pure, sublime and perfect blessedness. It is founded in love, benevolent and god-like. It will be fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Can the godly contemplate it but with a kind of holy astonishment and extacy ? Without the most animated thanksgiving and praise ? Without the highest animation and engagedness in their master's service ? What

\* 2 Tim. iv. 8 † Isaiah lxii 5.

‡ Isaiah xliii. 11.



are all the labors, reproaches, dangers and sufferings of the present time, compared with the glory and blessedness, which shall be revealed in them? How should they lift up the hands which hang down, and confirm the feeble knees? How should the fearful heart take courage and be strong?

But there are other important views in which this reward may be termed the joy of the Lord, which may still further animate Christians, and stimulate them to obedience. It is a joy to which Christ chose and appointed them from everlasting. According as he hath chosen us in him from the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.\* Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.† The kingdom was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and they were appointed to inherit its eternal joy.‡ They were not appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.||

It is the joy of their Lord, as he purchased it for them with his own blood. All the blessings bestowed on the saints are the effects of the death and righteousness of Jesus Christ. They have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. The dignity and blessedness of heaven is termed the purchased possession§: Which

is the earnest of our inheritance, until the purchased possession, according to the riches of his grace. He prepares it for them. I go to prepare a place for you.

Again, it is the joy of their Lord, as he bestows it upon them. It is his free gift. My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life. He applauds the good and faithful servant, and pronounces, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. The gift of God is eternal life thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. In all these respects the joy of the saints is the joy of the Lord.

He prepares them for it as well as bestows it upon them. As it is a reward originating in love, so no man can possibly enjoy it until the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. Christ therefore effectually calls them by his grace; forms their hearts to love him; unites them in love to himself, to holiness, to their brethren, and all the interests of his kingdom, and so enables them to enter into his joy.

No sooner is the heart renewed, the glory of God and the Redeemer seen, and the heart made to rejoice in the dominion, glory and blessedness of God, and in the happiness of the saints, in the holiness and perfection of the kingdom of God, and in the hope of this glory and blessedness, than the good and faithful servant has a foretaste and earnest of this blessedness. As the Israelites ate of the clusters of Eschol in the wilderness before they entered

\* Ephesus i. 4, † John xv. 16.

‡ Mathew xxv. 34. || 1 Thess. v. 9

§ Ephe. i. 7 14.

into the promised land, so the saints, have sweet prelibations of the joy of their Lord before they are admitted to the fulness and perfection of it, in his immediate presence. Hence the apostle terms it, the seal of the spirit, and the earnest of the purchased possession\* This, in the clear and realizing views of faith, sometimes rises even to joy unspeakable and full of glory. The saints may from their own experience adopt the language of the poet and sing,

The hill of Sion yields,  
A thousand sacred sweets,  
Before we reach the heavenly  
fields,  
Or tread the golden streets.

The greater proficiency the good man makes in love, and the more he becomes united to God and his interests, the greater will be his joy in the present life, the clearer his evidence of an interest in his Saviour's love, and that he shall finally enter into the full joys of his God. As every one will be rewarded according to his works, according to the degree of his love, faith, hope, and all the fruits of his righteousness, the most holy and fruitful will have the greatest joy and blessedness, in time and for ever. The better relish a man has for a royal and most delicious entertainment, the more pleasure it will give him. If one has ten times better appetite than another, he will have ten times the pleasure in participating in the same dainties; so in proportion to man's holiness, his love to God, to his Saviour and the interests of his kingdom, the greater, in the na-

ture of things, in time and eternity, will be his blessedness.

What engaging motives in these views have Christians to forget the things which are behind, and like the holy apostle, to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus! To give diligence, to add to their faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. How may Christians in this way be sealed to the day of redemption? Have the earnest of their inheritance on this side heaven, glorify God, and rejoice in him with accumulated joys for evermore? Were they appointed to these joys from the foundation of the world, has Christ purchased them with his own precious blood, hath he prepared them for his faithful servants, and does he give them to them, how incalculable is his love, how free and sovereign his mercy? How will all the saved lay their crowns at his feet, and shout grace, grace from the foundation to the top stone? Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory! How should Christians feel and acknowledge that God hath wrought all their work in them, that by grace they are saved, and ascribe the whole glory of their effectual calling, sanctification and hope of heaven to him only? How should their hearts expand with gratitude, and their lips continually speak his praise? How practical is our subject? How calculated to revive the hearts of the saints?

\* Ephe. i. 13 14.

To awaken and invigorate every grace, and call into exertion all the energies of the soul in the service of the Redeemer, and his holy kingdom? How should the love of Christ constrain them to every good word and work? How should the purity, sublimity, glory, fulness and eternity of the joy set before them, excite and animate them to diligence, zeal, fortitude and faithfulness? O ye blessed of the Lord, let not your heart be troubled, neither be afraid. Be not weary in well doing: for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not. Since your reward in heaven is so great, set not your affections on things on the earth, but on thing above. By faith realize the glory of your inheritance. Bring the day of retribution near, think how it approaches every year, month and day; nay, every moment, whether you wake or sleep, rejoice or mourn. Hear the approbation and plaudit of your judge, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Contemplate how publicly they shall be pronounced, before assembled worlds of men and angels. Be always looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Think and converse much of the joy of your Lord, how godlike, how full, uninterrupted and lasting it will be; and be all love, gratitude, life, exertion and diligence in the service of your Lord. Be helpers of each other's faith and hope and joy. Provoke one another unto love and good works. Exhort one another daily, and so much the

more as ye see the day approaching. Amen.



MESSRS. EDITORS,

IF you think the following will not exclude what is more profitable from your valuable Magazine, you are requested to insert it.

*Thoughts on Proverbs xxiii. 7.*

"For as he thinketh in his heart,  
so is he."

THIS is an important passage of scripture. But important as it is, no one has, by perversion, suffered greater violence than this. It has been used to prove that every man is right in his own way, if he be sincere in it—that it matters not, as respects the moral rectitude of a person's belief and practice, provided he be sincere. Hence, it has been used as a broad foundation for universal catholicism. Taken in the sense in which some would understand it, we must by no means refuse to extend our charity and fellowship to the infidel, or those of any other character, if they with that boldness, which is evincive of sincerity, avow their sentiments. And those who thus understand this passage of scripture, think it unchristian that the sentiments of all are not thus liberal—that all, how much soever they may clash and jar in their sentiments, are not united in their fellowship. It is undoubtedly the case, that there is among Christians, in many instances, too much illiberality, and too great a degree of

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ensoriousness, and too much want of fellowship; hence, a specious appearance is attached to the principle which encourages universal fellowship. The want of fellowship among Christians, is, in many instances, to be lamented; this, undoubtedly, often separates those, in this life who are one in Christ, and whose fellowship will be perfect in the day when he appeareth. But, a spirit of universal, indiscriminate fellowship and charity would be much more to be lamented. And the principle which encourages it, supposed by some to be deducible from that declaration of the wise man we are now considering, is, perhaps, the most dangerous of any to which the word of God stands opposed.

1. It is in the highest degree dangerous to those who embrace it; as it is calculated to make them sit down at ease, without any enquiry concerning the justness of their sentiments, or the safety of their state.

Why should a person, who believes that he is right in that in which he is sincere, take any pains to examine his sentiments—to bring them to the light? Why should he give himself any anxiety about his future state, if sincerity make him right, and hence secure his happiness? If this principle be just, there would be no propriety in our ever harboring an anxious thought about futurity, if we could, by any means, be wrought into the belief that we were sincere in our present principles and practice. And the danger of this principle appears in this, that those who embrace it, are, in consistency with what

it teaches them, so apt to speak peace to themselves, saying, "I believe I am sincere in my belief, therefore, there can be no reason for any anxiety." Such speak peace to themselves, when God hath said, there is no peace to them. No doubt, those whom Christ represented as coming to him at the day of judgment, and saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunken in thy presence, and hast thou not taught in our streets?" he intended to represent as sincere; but did their sincerity recommend them?

2. This is a principle dangerous, not only to private happiness, but also to the happiness of the public.

God has given us various appetites and passions; it is not hard for us to forget or to disbelieve, that a part of the trial to which He intended we should be subject, in this life, consists in a due regulation of these appetites and passions; nor is it difficult for us to believe, while under the influence of corrupt nature, that God intended we should seek for happiness in the full indulgence of every propensity. Should a person become sincere in this belief, as we may easily imagine, his belief would be right, on the principle we are now considering. Our belief will have influence on our conduct, and if our belief with respect to any thing be right, it cannot be wrong to conduct according to this belief. But should those who believe it right to gratify, to the full, every passion God has given them, conduct accordingly, and should this belief become general, and be as generally acted out, what

would be the consequence?—Consider what are the passions of men, and consider what must be the effect of their being universally gratified, and we need look no farther to discover the dangerous tendency of this principle. May not the plunderer, who is destitute of property, think he has a better right to a part of his neighbor's property, than his neighbor has to the whole? May not the murderer think he has a right to murder? Nay, there have been instances in which this atrocious act has been thought to be a duty, and it has been committed to discharge a supposed duty. May not the incendiary, the robber and the seducer of the artless and the unsuspecting, think themselves right? Might not some of the inquisitors of the church of Rome, those masters of cruelty, have thought themselves right in the most extreme rigors of their cruelty.

This principle, against which I would prepossess the minds of my readers, would prove, that in many instances, the most flagrant enormities ever committed were right. Saul, a most bloody persecutor of the church, verily thought he was doing God service when he was engaged in this work. Was he not sincere in his belief and practice? Hear what he himself says: "After the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." But did Paul's sincerity justify him? No; on account of what he had done against the church, he says, "he was not fit to be called an apostle," and that he obtained mercy because he "did it ignorantly." Here observe,

there would be no ground for mercy to be exercised, if, because he verily thought he was doing God service, he *were* doing it. When it is said that a person is right in his own belief, if he be sincere, we are apt to be caught by the word *sincere*; its general import being something commendable. But may not a person be as sincere in hating, as in loving God? May he not be as sincere in the practice of sin, as in the practice of holiness? And is not sincerity as criminal in the one case as it is commendable in the other? Yea, sincerity in sin, instead of rendering it not criminal, is the very essence of its criminality.

Having shewn the dangerous tendency of this principle, I shall now shew its absurdity. And 1st, if this principle be true, it proves that the light which God has given to regulate our belief and practice, is useless and worse than useless.

May we not be sincere as well without light as with it? Yea, the ignorant are generally more obstinate and fixed—more fortified against conviction, than those whose understandings are enlightened. Must we not suppose that some of the idolatrous heathen are sincere? If sincerity can make their belief and practice right, why are they so severely reprobated in scripture? If sincerity can make their worship right, how do our opportunities for knowing what are the mind and will of the Lord exalt us above them? How can it be said that any, in comparison with them, are "exalted to heaven" in point of privilege. Must we not suppose that many are sincere in the belief of lies? If sincer-

ity can make belief right, what propriety is there in this passage of scripture: "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness." This principle makes our own feelings the standard of right and wrong, but the language of the word of God is, "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

2d. If this principle be true, it will prove that there are no fixed principles of truth, and no fixed principles of right and wrong.

We are right in our faith, when we believe the truth, and wrong in our faith, when we believe that which is false. This is self-evident. Hence it follows, if sincerity make our belief right, that the belief of any two persons, with respect to a particular point, although they be directly opposed, is a belief of the truth; and hence, it follows, if these two opposite beliefs be each a belief of what is true, and hence right, that there are no fixed principles of truth—that truth is the most uncertain and variable thing in the universe.

Further, this principle will prove that the same thing may be true and false at the same time. One person may believe a proposition true, and another may as sincerely believe it false, and if sincerity make our belief right, both are right in their belief, at the same time; but, as

it is self-evident, that that faith is wrong, which consists in a belief of what is false, it clearly follows, that the principle, that sincerity makes our belief right, can have no foundation, unless the same thing can be true and false at the same time. Can any principle be good from which spring such absurdities?

Further, if this principle be right, it proves that there are no fixed principles of right and wrong. One person sincerely believes this sentiment or this action right; another believes the contrary sentiment and action right; according to the principle, I would disprove, both are right, and if both be right, when both are opposed with respect to the same things, then, there are no fixed principles of right and wrong; and right and wrong depend not on any connection existing in the reason and nature of things, but on the bare impressions which things make upon our senses.

According to this principle, the absurdity of which now stares us in the face, for him who believes that God is a being who ought to be loved, it is right to love him; but for him who sees no beauty or excellence in God's character, why he should be desired or loved, and who must hence conclude that he is not lovely, it is wrong to love him, it is right not to love him. If any person sincerely believes the bible is the word of God, he is right in his belief; so, on the other hand, if any one sincerely believe the bible is a forgery, that is, if he has become a thorough infidel he is right—right in thus denying the Lord who bought him,



But here again this principle clashes with the scriptures, which declare that those who thus deny the Lord, "bring upon themselves swift destruction." This principle, which we can no longer believe true, teaches us that he who, convinced by the evidence which exists in proof of the being of a God, believes in his existence, does right; but on the other hand, it teaches us that he is right, who has rendered himself so callous, as to become insensible to the proofs which God has given of his existence, and hence believes there is no God, right, not only in denying the Lord who bought him, but right in denying the God who reigns above!

The principle, which is thus dangerous, thus absurd and contradictory in its consequences, and thus opposed to the word of God, which claims to be the only standard of truth and righteousness, and which declares that there is but one faith, can have no foundation; we must renounce it, would we not run the risk of stumbling over it into everlasting ruin.

Having exhibited, at much greater length than was at first contemplated, the dangerous nature, absurdity and falsehood of the principle which some have thought deducible from the passage of scripture under consideration, it is high time to bring into view the real doctrine which it does contain. Altho this passage has suffered the greatest violence, by the perversion to which we have attended, yet the instruction it contains is important. We are taught by it, that all moral good and evil con-

sists in the exercises of the heart, and that these determine the character of man.

Could we read the scriptures with a single, unprejudiced eye, we should at once see that this is the doctrine which the passage under consideration contains: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." That is, if the thoughts of our hearts be good, if we have such exercises toward God, as are becoming, and proper exercises toward holiness and sin and toward our fellow men, our moral characters are good. But, on the other hand, if the exercises of our hearts be evil; if our exercises toward God, holiness and sin, and toward our fellow men be evil, our moral characters are evil. Thus, according to the declaration of Solomon, do moral good and evil consist in the exercises of the heart, and thus do the exercises of the heart determine the character of the man.

As this doctrine is important, I shall advance some further proofs in support of it.

1st. Some considerations will be advanced to prove that moral good and evil consist in the exercises of the heart. We are exhorted to keep our hearts with all diligence. The reason assigned for this is, "for out of it are the issues of life." There could not be sufficient ground for so emphatical an exhortation were not the exercises of our hearts possessed of moral qualities. The issues of life could not proceed from the heart, were not its exercises morally good or evil. The prophet Joel, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, commands "Rend your hearts and not your garment." The

children of Israel had become sinful in the sight of God ; as the command that they should reform, principally respected the heart, we are taught that good and evil have their seat in the heart, and that this is their only seat. "Out of the heart, says our Saviour, proceed evil thoughts, murders, &c." "With the heart, says St. Paul, man believeth unto righteousness." Thus it appears, from other scriptures as well as from the one we have particularly considered, that moral good and evil consist in the exercises of the heart. I shall

2. Attempt to prove that the exercise, of the heart determine the character of the man.

Solomon declares that "a man's heart deviseth his way." Do we judge of a person's character by the courses we see him pursuing, and does a man's heart devise his way, it is certain that the exercises of the heart do ultimately determine the character of the man. Our Saviour says that "A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth that which is good ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of the heart, bringeth forth that which is evil, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Thus Christ has taught us, that the treasure of the good man's heart is good, and that he, out of this good treasure, bringeth forth to the view of others, good things ; and that the treasure of the evil man's heart is evil, and that he, out of this treasure, bringeth forth, to the view of others, evil things. "By these fruits, it is also said, ye shall know them." Thus, not only in the sight of God,

but frequently in the view of men, is the character of the man determined by the qualities and exercises of the heart. These things alone determine our characters, in the sight of God, as he looks directly on the heart ; and as "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh," we are, in many instances, at liberty to judge of a person's character by his conduct, considering it as indicative of the exercises of the heart.

In addition to what has been said, some remarks may be profitably subjoined.

1. Our depravity has its seat in the heart, and not in the understanding.

It is the opinion of some that our hearts have not become depraved in consequence of the fall—that our understandings alone are weakened, and that were they cleared of this darkness, our hearts would become right of course. This is a very dangerous doctrine, according to which, every man is inclined to do right, and *does right*, so far as he has understanding.—Every man does, in his heart, love the character of God, and there is no necessity for any change of heart ; light is all that is wanting, and the light of the day of judgment will bring all men to their proper place. But the single declaration of the wise man, to which we have attended, independent of the whole tenor of scripture, destroys all possible foundation of this doctrine. If the heart were right, the understanding would be enlightened of course, but, as long as the heart remains in its natural state, not all the light which can be given, is sufficient to clear it of darkness.

2. We see that the true doctrine of the words we have considered, is in direct opposition to that which is supposed by some to be deducible from them. Sincerity, in the performance of any action, implies that the heart is engaged in the performance of it; it implies, that the language of our conduct is the language of our hearts. Is sincerity in sin an excuse for it? Are we excusable for opposing God, because our hearts and our affections are set against him? The sincerity which sinners manifest, in sinning against God, aggravates their criminality. Where then shall we find a place for the liberal doctrine: "It is no matter what a person believes, if he be sincere?"

3. We see the importance of coming to the light. Were the doctrine which has been exploded true, there would be no impropriety in refusing to come to the light. We might be as sincere while ignorant as when enlightened. But this doctrine being false in itself, and built on a false foundation, it becomes us to seek for light, and to come to it, although our deeds be reprobated; for we cannot see the truth without light, and we cannot embrace the truth before we see it, and *truth* must be embraced by us, or we perish forever.

4. We see that the proper subject of every one's inquiry is, his own heart. Do moral good and evil consist in the exercises of the heart, and are our characters determined in the sight of God, by the exercises of our hearts, then surely it becomes us seriously to enquire

into to the state of our hearts, and to keep them with all diligence. God searches the heart and tries the reins, that he may render to every man according to his deeds. What a motive is here presented, that we should search our own hearts, and see that they are amended, that we may be able to bear the scrutinizing eye of Omniscience!

5. We see that the most profitable preaching must be that which is plainly addressed to the heart. God in his word speaks to the heart, and the messages with which he has commissioned his servants are addressed to the heart. Hence we are taught, not only by our subject, but also by divine example, that ministers, would they be faithful and profitable to their people, must speak plainly to the heart. Those who do otherwise, heal slightly the hurt of the daughter of God's people, "saying peace, peace, when there is no peace." If ministers ought thus to preach, when they do thus preach they ought not to be blamed, but to be heard, and their messages to be received as the messages of God. Y. Z.

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*An attempt to explain several of the principal texts, which are brought forward by those who hold to a universal Restoration, in support of their system.*

(Continued from p. 130.)

NO. V.

"Pharaoh shall see them and shall be comforted over all his



multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord God."

Ezek. xxxii. 31.

SINCE I have set down this text, the thought strikes me, that perhaps the Universalists will think I impose upon them, by calling this one of their principal texts,\* but I am confident I have heard it brought to support the Restoration system. It is a common observation, that a drowning man will catch at a straw. In this thing the Universalists resemble a drowning man; they catch at the word *comforted* in this text, without examining its true import by its connection. What is Pharaoh represented as being comforted with? Is it with the approach of their feet, who publish glad ti-

\* I know that the Chaunceans have other texts on which they make more dependence; but these are chiefly such as are made use of, in common, by them and the Huntingdonians, who believe in no future punishment. Such texts cannot therefore be considered as the appropriate texts of those, who hold to a restoration from future punishment: for these two kinds of universalists, in some respects, have no communion together. Mr. W. and Dr. C. spend much of their strength in trying to explain away the endlessness of those words and phrases, which speak of future punishment: but Dr. H. thinks all this is labor lost, and that nothing can be more disingenuous, and wider from the truth. The latter thinks that if *endless* punishment can be expressed by words, it is expressed in the bible. I think it difficult to find texts to which the restoration system can pretend any *peculiar* claim; I therefore venture to set this down among *their* principal texts.

dings of salvation? Is he comforted with the declaration of sins pardoned, and his iniquities blotted out? No such thing is mentioned, or even intimated. No intimation is given that he is ever to be released from his confinement. "Pharaoh shall *see them*, and shall be comforted." Pharaoh shall see them, i. e. Ashur, Elam, Meshek, Tubal, Edom, the princes of the north and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain, and who with their terror are ashamed of their might, and lie uncircumcised with them that be slain with the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit. Pharaoh shall see them and be comforted over all his multitude. The idea communicated appears to be this, that Pharaoh, whose pride would be greatly mortified by being vanquished with all his numerous forces, would be selfishly gratified by seeing so many other mighty warriors, with their numerous hosts, vanquished and brought down to the pit, as well as himself. Misery is said to love company. If we are depraved, and yet retain all the pride of our depraved natures, we cannot brook it to see others exalted; we are therefore gratified to see them brought down as well as we. This truth is set in a striking point of light in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah. The fall of the king of Babylon, with the overthrow of his kingdom is the subject in view, when we meet with this passage, "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief

ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become " weak as we ? art thou also become like unto us ? "

This text is very parallel with the one in Ezekiel, which is now under consideration. Here the chief ones of the earth, who had been conquered by the king of Babylon, or by other conquerors, appear to be comforted in the grave, when they see the mighty king of Babylon come to join them being now as weak as they. Yet no one can think such to be the " comfort of love."

There is a passage in the xxxi. chapter of Ezekiel, the 16th verse, which is perfectly similar to the one in the xxxii. chapter. " I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit : and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth."

—That is, the kings and chief ones of the earth, who had gone down into the nethermost parts of the earth, should be comforted, or were comforted at the fall of the king of Assyria.—But, let me ask, is such comfort as this any symptom of the beginning of a restoration to the image and favor of God ?

It is not improbable that one reason why this passage, which speaks of the comfort of Pharaoh, has more attracted the attention of the Universalists, has been owing to a mistake as to the man who is intended. It is not that Pharaoh who was over-

thrown with all his host in the Red Sea. It is evident from the whole chapter with several preceding chapters, that the Pharaoh, of whom the prophet spake was then alive. The glory of Egypt was to depart with him. The Chaunceans are peculiarly desirous of getting Judas, the Sodomies, those who perished in the flood, and those who were drowned in the Red Sea out of hell : for then they, perhaps, think the rest of the damned will come out of course. But a small attention to this text, with its connection, will make it clear, that the Pharaoh who was drowned in the Red Sea is not here spoken of ; and a small attention to it, together with the exercise of a little candor, will convince the reader, that whatever Pharaoh is intended, his being comforted is no indication of a restoration from a state of sin and misery to a state of holiness and blessedness.

The whole of this chapter, but particularly from the 17th verse to the end, is recommended to the attention of the reader, as quite a solemn portion of sacred writ. Here, whole nations are described as going down to the pit *uncircumcised*, that is, being interpreted, unrenewed. In this situation, the inspired word leaves them. " In the place where the tree falleth there it shall be." It is a dreadful thing to go down into the grave uncircumcised, unprepared : for in the grave there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom. From this portion of scripture, we learn that *whole nations* go down to the grave unprepared. *Follow not a multitude to do evil :*

*For though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished. Though millions of sinners be shut up in hell, they will not be able to break open their prison : For Christ, the Judge, shutteth and no man openeth. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."*

## NO. VI.

"By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water."

1 Peter iii. 19, 20.

THIS, by the Chaunceans, is considered as a capital text to support the restoration system. My readers will recollect, that this system supposes that some sinners will be punished in hell, but that these also will be delivered from sin and misery, and finally attain to the blessedness of heaven.

The advocates for this system think, that the passage now before us supports their scheme, by declaring that Christ, after his crucifixion, went and preached the gospel to the spirits in the prison of hell. I shall first offer several arguments against this construction of the passage, and then state what I conceive to be its true meaning.

In opposition to the above construction there are these objections :

1. Christ, upon dying, went to heaven, and not to the prison of hell. When he was dying,

he said, Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit. His human soul then left the body, and was received into heaven to his father's presence. This is strengthened by his declaration to the dying thief, This day shalt thou be *with me in paradise*.

To this will be objected Acts ii. 27. "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." The word here translated *hell* is *hades*. This word, it is well known by those acquainted with the Greek, signifies the *unseen* world, without certainly determining, whether it be happiness or misery, tho' it is acknowledged that its connection will sometimes determine that it means the state of the miserable. Christ's soul was not, like the souls of others, left any length of time in the state of separate spirits, neither did his body putrify in the grave. We ought to understand this passage so, since *hades* (hell) is capable of being so understood ; but *paradise*, into which Christ told the penitent thief he was that day about to enter, is not a name ever given to the place of the damned.

2. Another objection against the universalists' construction of this text is this, that Christ is represented as finishing his sufferings *on the cross*. They who suppose that Christ's spirit went to hell and preached, suppose also that it went to hell to complete the sufferings necessary for a full atonement. But when Christ was dying upon the cross he said, *it is finished*. The apostle says, "He humbled himself, and became



obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He speaks of this as the depth of his humiliating sufferings.

3. This preaching, if it was in hell, and if it issued in the conversion of any, would prevent the sentence of the last day from proceeding according to the deeds done in the body; which is the way, the scriptures declare it shall proceed. If we suppose the preaching mentioned in this passage was in hell, it either issued in the conversion of some, or none: if in the conversion of none, how does it make for the Universalists?

Gospel truths will no doubt for ever be in the view of the damned; but these will not relieve their anguish. But if, on the other hand, this preaching issued in the conversion and salvation of some, then this difficulty arises, how can these, at the last day, be judged according to the deeds done in the body? It will be granted, that all the deeds which they did *in the body* were sinful deeds. While their spirits dwelt in their bodies they neither repented, nor believed. And the Apostle declares 2. Cor. v. 10. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that *every one may receive the things done in his body* according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Those with whom we now contend, believe there will be two characters at the day of judgment, that there will be saints and sinners; and do they not perceive from the text last quoted, that so many will be saints then as were so in this present life, and no more? This then is

a considerable objection against supposing that almost eighteen hundred years ago, Christ went to hell to preach the gospel to the spirits imprisoned there.

4. Christ lets us know, that if we do not agree with our adversary quickly, while we are in the way with him, we shall be cast into prison, and not come out till the uttermost farthing be paid: Mat. v. 25, 26. By this we are led to understand that this life is a day of grace, in which God is proposing to us terms of reconciliation and pardon, and that our refusal of the terms, during this day of grace, will render it for ever impossible that the debt should be *forgiven* us; but that we must be cast into the prison prepared by the great King, and there remain till we have *ourselves paid* the uttermost farthing of the debt. "Verily I say unto thee thou shall by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." This we conceive to be a strong and pointed declaration, that the wicked, who are once sent to hell will never be released from their confinement; for surely they can never in their own persons, by doing or suffering, satisfy that holy law which they have broken and are still breaking. This text, however, must mean either that the wicked will never obtain a release from their prison, or that they will not be released till they have suffered all that which the law threatened, and which they had deserved. If it mean the first thing supposed, the restoration system certainly has no foundation; and if it mean the second, namely, that the wicked will be

released from the prison of hell, but not until they have suffered all the punishment due to their sins, then there would not be the least propriety in preaching the gospel to them after their confinement in prison: For the gospel is altogether a system of grace; but men, who pay their own debts, need no surety, and need nothing remitted to them. And this will spoil the interpretation, which the restoration system has given to the passage, which we are considering. The advocates for this system suppose that Christ went among the damned spirits in hell, and preached the gospel to them; but if damned spirits are by no means to come out thence till they have paid the uttermost farthings, what good could the *gospel* do them?

5. The history, which we have of the antediluvians in the vi. chapter of Genesis, is against that interpretation of this text, which is advanced by the Chauncian Universalists. "And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." My spirit shall not *always* strive with man. To this agree the words of the text in Peter, "When *once* the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." Once God waited on them, but not now. They had the gospel preached to them. Christ strove with them once, while the ark was preparing, and that was a hundred and twenty years. During this time, Christ employed Noah as a preacher of righteousness to them; but they were disobe-

ent; they would not hear; they would not repent; they sinned away the day of God's patience, the 120 years to which he limited the striving of his spirit with them, and now they are damned spirits, shut up in the prison of hell. If the Lord had designed to continue the preaching of the gospel, and the striving of his spirit with the people who perished in the flood, even after that catastrophe, he would not have told them, that his spirit should not *always* strive with them; and then limit it to just an hundred and twenty years, which was the time the ark was preparing.

I promised, after bringing some objections against the Universalist interpretation of this passage, to state what I conceived to be its true meaning.— This I have in some measure anticipated under the last particular. These spirits were not preached to in prison; but these spirits which were once preached to, i. e. while they were upon earth, were now, in the time when the apostle wrote, in prison. "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits (now) in prison." The word *now*, I suppose to be understood, and this will relieve the seeming difficulty of the passage. The sense is this— The old world had a day of grace. Christ used means to bring them to repentance before they were destroyed. They enjoyed the preached gospel and the strivings of the spirit. God did not consume them in a moment as soon as he began to be angry with them for their disobedience; but his long-suffering waited all the while the ark,

that capacious vessel, was building, which took up 120 years. When the ark was prepared, and Noah and his family were safely shut in, the Lord made way for his wrath to come upon an ungodly world; he swept them all away, and confined their rebellious spirits in the prison below. Here they were when Peter wrote his epistle. To this exposition of the text, it will be objected, that the apostle says concerning these spirits, "which were *sometime* disobedient;" as though they were not so when he wrote.

To suppose, they were not disobedient when he wrote, is to suppose that some are converted between their death and the general judgment, so that when these shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, they will not receive according to the deeds done in the body. But this objection against their conversion in hell we have previously brought into view.

The apostle does not say, Which were *sometime* disobedient, but now obedient. The word is to be understood to mean *of old*, or in ancient times, to mark the distance of the time when these disobedient men lived, from the time in which Peter lived, and not to mark the distance between their disobedience and their obedience: for there is nothing said of their obedience—and this would be a capital omission, if the exposition, against which we contend, were the true one. If that exposition be admitted, it must also be admitted, that this is the only text in the bible, which speaks of preaching in hell; might we not, therefore,

have expected some explicit account of its success?

A query may arise in the minds of some, how the *antediluvians* came to be particularized, if the preaching referred to, was what was enjoyed on earth?

To this we would answer, Is it not equally difficult, to see why they were distinguished from all other sinners, if the preaching was enjoyed in the prison of hell? Surely they were not the only sinners in that place of torment.

One reason why those, who were destroyed by the flood, are here introduced as enjoying the means of grace for a long time, is to give a clear idea of the divine patience and long-suffering; and that though God will miserably destroy the impenitent at last, yet he is loth that any should perish. Another reason why the Holy Spirit led the apostle to mention the means, which were used with these particular sinners, might be to make another use of that piece of sacred history, to illustrate Christian baptism and an interest in Christ, by the safety of Noah and his family in the ark, while all their enemies were swept away by the flood, "Wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

#### COROLLARIES.

1. The children of Adam do in this life, enjoy a gracious probation; a time when the Spirit of God strives with them; a time when the long-suffering



of God waits. Our offended, but merciful Sovereign gives us a space to repent. He uses means which are calculated to bring us to repentance. Among these gracious means, a preached gospel has from the beginning been the most distinguished.

2. This gracious probation will not last always. *Once* the long suffering of God waited upon the old world; but at length the time came, when God could consistently wait no longer, he sent the flood and swept them all away, unprepared as they were. Now a long-suffering God is waiting on *us*. Christ is coming to us in a preached gospel, and by the striving of his spirit. Do not let us, from the long-suffering and patience of God, draw this false conclusion, that he is not angry with the wicked, and that he will not at length, put an end to the day of his patience, and swear in his holy wrath, that they shall not enter into his rest!

3. The King of heaven has a prison. A prison is a necessary appendage of government. Not only kings, but republics make use of prisons as places of confinement for those, who are troublers of the common peace. The passage before us considers hell as the prison of the supreme Lord, where he eternally confines incorrigible offenders. It is spoken of as a prison Mat. v 25. and Rev. xx. 7. In allusion to prisoners confined in dungeons for enormous crimes, those, who are sent to suffer the pains of hell, are said to be *bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness*.

4. The souls of men will exist in a state of sensibility and

activity between death and the resurrection. Those who perished in the flood and left their bodies as dung upon the face of the earth, are nevertheless spoken of as being alive more than two thousand years afterward. They are however now spoken of as *spirits*, without bodies.—Angels exist and are sensible and active without being ever clothed with bodies, and the souls of men can exist, be sensible and active, when they are unclothed.

As we are taught by the scripture before us, that the souls of men will be active in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, so also we are taught that the souls of the impenitent will immediately pass into misery. The judgment of the great day has not yet come, but those who perished in the flood have long since been imprisoned in hell. If, my readers, you are not near the gates of paradise, you are near the gates of hell. "As the Lord liveth, and as your souls live, there is but a step between you and death;" and there is but a step between death and hell to those who die uninterested in the covenant of grace. How solemn the thought, that we are all so soon to come to the society of the spirits of just men made perfect, or to be shut up with the spirits which are in the prison of hell!

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*Explanation of Scriptural Types.*

NO. XIII.

*The BURNING BUSH Typical.*

**O**F the wonderful phenomena, which have astonished

the world, few have exceeded the prodigy which was exhibited to Moses, in the wilderness of Sinai. We have an account of it, Exod. iii. 2, 3. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush: and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. In this extraordinary appearance, are not the following evangelical subjects typically represented? Was not the fire, that pure, that subtle, and penetrating element, selected on this occasion, designed to represent the purity and spirituality of that God who is a consuming fire?—More particularly, did not this flame of fire in the bush, especially represent,

1. The divine nature dwelling in the man Christ Jesus? Very significantly is the nature of man represented by a bush, slender, feeble and incapable of resistance. For this reason the human nature of our divine Redeemer is termed, a root out of dry ground, Isa. liii. 2. a stem out of the rod of Jesse, a (righteous) branch out of his roots, xi. 1. and a tender plant, but a plant of renown, Ezek. xxxiv. 29. So frequently, in the holy scriptures, is the Deity exhibited by the figure of fire, to denote his spirituality, and purity, and the terrible effects of his indignation, the fire of his jealousy, which consumeth his enemies round about.

What a glowing type was the flame of fire in the bush, of the fulness of the godhead dwelling bodily in the person of our glo-

rious Immanuel? Was the bush burning in fire, to Moses, a most surprising phenomenon? and is not the union of the divine and human nature, in our blessed Redeemer, a spectacle far more wonderful to angels and to men? If Moses turned aside to see this great sight, should not we divest ourselves of other objects, that in solemn meditation, we may contemplate and admire the glorious mystery of godliness, *God manifest in the flesh*? If Moses wondered that the bush burned, and yet was not consumed, shall we not be filled with equal, nay, greater astonishment, that this frail nature of man, in the person of Jesus Christ, is not dissolved by the perpetual residence of the uncreated and eternal *Jehovah* in it?

2. Hath it not been supposed, with good reason, that the burning bush was a striking similitude of the oppressed and afflicted Israelites under their cruel bondage in Egypt, from which they were brought forth as from a fiery furnace, and of the church of Christ in all ages?—Which for the imbecility of it is termed, a *bruised reed* and *smoking flax*, and its members *trees* of righteousness, the *planting* of the Lord, the rod of his inheritance. Doth not the flame of fire in the bush, aptly represent those fiery trials by which it hath been tried and purified? the fire of dissension within, and the flame of persecution without? Did the bush in the fire go near to destruction; and hath not the church, in her trials, gone near to extinction?—How perilous its situation, when it floated in the ark on the boisterous surface

of the mighty deep?—When in the furnace of affliction in Egypt?—In the captivity of Babylon?—In the persecution of Antiochus, who swore in wrath, that he would make Jerusalem the common burying ground of the Jews, and blot out their name from under heaven?—When persecuted by Herod and the Jews?—By the great red dragon, and the man of sin, who hath worn out the saints of the Most High? How similar and often hath been its condition to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace? But the bush which burned was not consumed, for the Lord was in it. And the church hath not perished, *the gates of hell have not prevailed against her*, because God hath

been her refuge and strength, a present help in trouble. In all her afflictions, the angel of his presence hath saved her.—When on the verge of destruction, God hath helped her, and that right early. She may now adopt her ancient expressions, and say, Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet have they not prevailed against me; (Psa. cxxix.) and the exulting language of the Psalmist (Psa. cxxiv.) If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick. Blessed be the Lord who hath not given us a prey to their teeth. Let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth, and for ever. Amen.